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ABSTRACT

Maintaining an effective school system means retaining the outstanding teachers supporting it. According to a recent survey, many southern California teachers felt they would be disappointed if their children entered the profession. In California alone, there are 49,000 inactive teachers. One problem may be student discipline. Whereas top discipline problems in the 1940s were talking, chewing gum, making noise, getting out of turn, wearing improper clothing, and littering, today's main problems are drug abuse, alcohol, suicide, rape, robbery, and assault. One assistant principal of a southern California high school sought the help of students and community business leaders in recognizing effective teachers and restoring dignity to the teaching profession. Once students had identified 10 effective teaching criteria, teachers selected three teachers to recognize. The business community supplied the gifts--in one instance, a luxury weekend in Scottsdale, Arizona, for two teachers and their families. Other outstanding teachers were provided with free dinners by local restaurant owners. The recognition program also included a ceremony honoring the teachers in front of county guests, key business leaders, district personnel, board members, and family members. Students repaid an aviation company's generosity by performing a Christmas program at the airport. The limitations of what schools can accomplish by themselves can be overcome by cooperating with the community. (MLH)

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STARSEARCH

A Teacher Recognition Program For You and Your Community

Speech delivered at the California Educational Partnership Consortium
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A Teacher Recognition Program for You and Your Community

Maintaining an effective school system means retaining the outstanding teachers that support it. That task, however, may prove challenging to any board of education. Many school districts continue to hunt for effective teachers to teach our youth.

In a recent survey of teachers in southern California, many teachers felt that they world be disappointed if their children entered the profession. In California alone, there are 49,000 inactive teachers. One has to wonder what the impact would be professionally if 49,000 qualified doctors chose not to practice medicine! Why are qualified teachers not staying in the classrooms to teach our children? What can we do about it?

In order to analyze this problem, one must begin with a keen understanding of what effective teaching is. Vartin Gregorian, president of Brown University explains that "teaching is the mantle of our humanity." Good teachers motivate, inspire, and create. Yet, one cannot be so naive as to ignore the fact that many of the problems that interfere with effective teaching center around the students that teachers now have to teach. Looking back to 1940, the top discipline problems were the following:

1. Talking
2. Chewing gum
3. Making noise
4. Getting up out of turn
5. Wearing improper clothing
6. Not putting paper in wastebasket.

However, in the 1980's discipline problems in public schools revolved around the following:

1 Drug abuse
2. Alcohol
3. Suicide

4. Rape
5. Robbery
6. Assault

Aristotle thought that citizens should be taught to reflect the moral commitment of a society. What is the nature of that commitment today for teachers, especially if they feel alone in confronting the day to day task of reaching high risk students?

Peter Drucker explains that public-service institutions exist after all to " do good." That is, teachers see their mission as a moral absolute rather than as a means of achieving status. For example, Jeff Reed is a veteran teacher of 10 years at Huntington Park High School. To Reed, a teaching career is "a moral decision." He explains that "I can be socially productive and do something I feel good about." "Otherwise," he said, "it's all too easy to focus on the drawbacks of my chosen field. Low pay, shoddy treatment, it's all there (LA Times, March 6, 1990)."

As one educator who taught six years in the classroom and now serves as assistant principal at a high school in Anaheim, California, I asked for some help from the business community. I wanted to build some school-business partnerships for the sake of recognizing effective teachers and restoring some dignity to the teaching profession.

In seeking help from several business leaders, I needed to share a sense of vision and purpose. With them the teacher recognition program provided an outstanding opportunity for business leaders to help teachers and return something positive to the community that they serve.

The teacher recognition program began with student input. Students were asked to help identify a set criteria of characteristics for effective teaching. The following (10) characteristics came from an original list of 20:

1. Is positive about school and learning
2. Motivates me
3. Maintains discipline
4. Shows effective planning

5. Inspires others in class
6. Treats me fairly
7. Helps me develop my abilities
8. Shows commitment and is dedicated
9. Is creative about learning
10. Makes me feel good about learning

Once a list of characteristics for effective teaching was established, faculty input was needed. Teachers selected three teachers whom they wished to recognize.

I then took these ideas to the business leaders; we came together and agreed to recognize nine teachers. The 2300 students at Esperanza High School as well as teachers and administrators selected three teachers who they thought were deserving of the honor.

The business community supplied the gifts. I pursued and established a partnership with Martin Aviation, located at John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana, California. President and CEO Marvin Tuomala agreed to fly two teachers and their families aboard a Lear Jet to Scottsdale, Arizona. The teachers had an airplane and pilots at their disposal for the weekend. The general managers from the Anaheim Marriott (Ned Snavely) and Embassy Suites (Simeon Miranda) worked out accommodations for the teachers to stay in first class luxury for the weekend. Dinners were provided to the other (6) outstanding teachers and their guests by local restaurant owners.

Needless to say, with incentives like these, the students, teachers, business leaders and administrators were enthusiastic about the teacher recognition program.

A very important part of any recognition program includes a ceremony. On this special day, the selected teachers were honored in front of county guests, key business leaders and owners, district personnel, board members, and their peers; family members were also invited and attended. This ceremony was very moving and emotional. One father came to acknowledge his son by approaching the front stage and hugging him. A sense of warmth and pride exuded

from this young teacher. A special feeling was generated throughout the room because teachers were thrilled to receive these awards that the profession so richly deserved.

Since partnerships work both ways in terms of giving and receiving, our school performed at a Christmas program at Martin Aviation. The magic of the students brought smiles to the faces of the airline workers at John Wayne Airport. I have since then asked Westward Airline to fly our teachers this year. Hotel accommodations are set, and dinner tickets are waiting for the teachers who will be selected.

There are limitations to what schools can do by themselves. However, we can overcome many of these limitations by working together. this vision of working together carries with it a higher sense of community. Teachers, students, administrators, and business leaders all have their role to play. Yet, we must seek out ways to recognize our key teachers. We must nurture that connection that they provide. Good teachers are key leaders in any community; they provide a connection to us all.

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